

The remaining claims 2, 3, 5-7, 12-14, 16, 17, 19 and 21-25 are unchanged.

CLARITY OF CLAIMS

The Examiner has indicated that claims 8-10 and 18-20 are unclear due to improper form of multiple dependent claims.

The dependence of certain claims has now been changed, as listed above. The Applicant believes that all multiple dependent claims are now in an acceptable form.

ARGUMENTS AS TO NOVELTY AND INVENTIVE STEP

The Examiner has indicated that claims 1-4, 11-14, 21 and 23-25 lack inventive step over U.S. Patent No. 5,578,155 to Kawaguchi. The Applicant respectfully disagrees.

The present invention relates to the selective application of a releasing agent to selectively prevent bonding between the sheets, thereby facilitating separation of the three-dimensional object from the surrounding material. This provides major advantages of simplicity of implementation by allowing use of uniform coatings of adhesives or the like. The use of a releasing agent for selective prevention of bonding between adjacent sheets is neither taught nor in any way suggested by the cited art, as will now be detailed.

Specifically, according to one set of embodiments of the Kawaguchi reference, a powdery adhesive layer is selectively deployed by using a xerography unit. This is equivalent to the selective application of adhesive taught by U.S. Patent No. 5,071,503 mentioned in the background of the application.

Possibly of slightly more relevance is the embodiment of Figures 4A-4E in which a photosensitive adhesive is selectively pre-exposed to render it ineffective. Here too, however, use of a releasing agent is neither taught nor suggested.

The Examiner has stated that "It is well-known in the art to apply a material to prevent adhesion between t[w]o layers along a line of separation. It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have provided in KAWAGUCHI applying a release material to the sheets before bonding ...".

The Applicant strongly disputes this assertion for a number of reasons as follows:

Firstly, the Applicant submits that it is not well known in the art to use a releasing agent to selectively prevent adhesion between layers. To the contrary, the cited references are indicative of the level of complexity to which the existing techniques resort in order to achieve selective adhesion in the absence of the elegant solution provided by the present invention.

Secondly, the Applicant wishes to point out that, even if the use of a releasing agent were to be "well-known in the art", one familiar with the teachings of Kawaguchi would lack any motivation to combine use of a releasing agent with the techniques of Kawaguchi. Specifically, each embodiment of Kawaguchi is disclosed as providing selective attachment of sheets only in regions where attachment is desired. Since Kawaguchi inherently avoids adhesion in other regions, use of a releasing agent would clearly be superfluous.

In contrast, the present invention provides a major simplification of the production process for a three-dimensional object by allowing the use of sheets

uniformly covered with adhesive of any desired type. Selective adhesion is achieved by selective application of the releasing agent.

The Applicant takes this opportunity to submit an amended set of claims which the Applicant believes better define the point of novelty of the present invention. Independent claims 1 and 11 have been amended. The dependent claims remain largely unchanged, except for the correction of a few minor typographic errors, alteration of the dependency of several claims and a few other minor changes.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the opinions expressed in the written opinion is respectfully requested. A favorable Preliminary International Examination Report is respectfully and earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark M. Friedman
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No. 33,883

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